POSITION CHARACTERISTICS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO

SELECTION FOR PROMOTION

THESIS

Juan A. Kays, Major, USAF

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
AIR UNIVERSITY

AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio

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Juan A. Kays, BS

Major, USAF

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Juan A. Kays, BS

Major, USAF

Approved:

_____--signed--_____	27 Mar 08
Daniel T. Holt, Lt Col, USAF (Co-chairman)	Date
_____--signed--_____	27 Mar 08
Sonia Leach, Maj, USAF (Co-chairman)	Date
_____--signed--_____	27 Mar 08
Alan Heminger, AD-23, DAF (Member)	Date

Abstract

It is clear that job characteristics are key selection criteria for upward mobility. However, there are questions as to what types of position details facilitate individual objective success within an organization like the United States Air Force that relies solely on an internal labor market. While it is an individual responsibility to develop an employment plan, there are particular duties that are more desirable for continuation. This thesis looked at the professional records of a sample of officers to assess what position characteristics led to more advancement opportunities. It examined what duty experiences fared well for one measure of career progression that lends favorably to promotion in the Air Force: school in-residence selection. This study found that there was some support for the notion that proximity to mission enhanced opportunities for individual achievement in an internal labor market. The research better supported the theories that exposure to senior leadership and service overseas improved the likelihood of upward mobility.

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POSITION CHARACTERISTICS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO SELECTION FOR PROMOTION

I. Introduction

Background

Career success can be defined as a person's positive work and psychological outcomes that result from professional experiences (Ng, et al., 2005). Researchers have distinguished between *subjective* and *objective* measures of vocational achievements (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Subjective measures of career success focus on attitudes, emotions, and perceptions of how workers feel about their accomplishments. Objective measures of employment attainment focus on external indicators such as advancement or monetary boosts instead of perceptions (Feldman & Ng, 2007).

People motivated by objective success measures observe the paths taken by employees who have been chosen for continuation, pursuing opportunities within and beyond their capabilities to facilitate progress. In firms that rely on internal labor markets, individuals may be able to clearly identify a suitable course to achieve goals because they can draw conclusions from the institution's prior human resource management resolutions (O'Mahoney & Bechky, 2006). Members working in professional service firms find themselves in this situation. Individuals in these types of associations are challenged by a series of activities that are punctuated at a handful of distinct positions where members are evaluated for progression (Malos & Campion, 2000). Those that are selected for continuation are retained and persons not picked to continue leave the business.

For the system to succeed, the signals sent through the company's advancement decisions should align with the institution's strategic objectives. Putting this into practice, businesses generally establish a sequence of development opportunities for personnel and define incentives so that people will proceed in that direction (O'Mahoney & Bechky, 2006). These growth opportunities allow the member to apply their competencies to the demands of a position while simultaneously allowing them to learn new skills that will prepare them for further upward mobility. This allows immediate contributions as workers apply skills already garnered and makes possible development as persons stretch beyond their current talents, enhancing skills that will contribute to an association in the long run.

Many promotion systems choose from internal labor markets and a number of studies have highlighted these systems. Kerr (1950) led the way on labor market segmentation and service structures. He portrayed the labor market as an area where individuals move freely from one occupation to the next. Movement within the area was fairly easy; migration into or out of the area was more difficult. During the 1970s, research on internal labor markets really expanded, characterized by the influential efforts of Doeringer and Piore (Doeringer, 1986). They highlighted how firms and unions are the primary institutions that segment the markets. Additionally, Doeringer noted that internal labor markets provided implicit contracts for set wages and job security. This provided stability in a fluctuating economy. In the 1980s, Osterman (1982) wrote that workers entered a firm at a limited number of ports and continued through the ranks along well-defined job ladders. Lazear and Rosen (1981) further highlighted selection

through “tournament theory,” where promotions took place in a tournament structure. Salaries were not based on production necessarily because wages were fixed in advance. Ng et al. (2005) indicated that personnel can compete for continuation in two ways: contest mobility and sponsored mobility. Contest mobility indicated that all workers could compete for advancement. Sponsored mobility suggested that only those who were chosen by senior supervision attained upward mobility (Ng, et al., 2005).

While past studies have focused on internal labor markets in industry, little has been written on labor markets that are almost exclusively internal, like the United States Military. The Air Force officer promotion system mirrors much of what is reflected in internal labor market literature and is a good system to evaluate as a selection system that focuses almost exclusively on an internal labor market. Air Force officers are picked for advancement through a competitive process that is designed to choose the “best qualified officers” for positions of increased responsibility (AFI 36-2501, 2004). This is in concert with what Doeringer and Piore wrote about employees progressing along well defined job paths. The Air Force officer promotion program has an objective to provide a reasonably stable, consistent, and visible improvement pattern for all competitive categories (AFPAM 36-2506, 1997). This model is also consistent with internal labor market literature. DiPrete, Goux and Maurin (2002) highlighted how each business had an idiosyncratic production model, where people learned what trade routines were more important, and that these persons were rewarded for their increased value through regular advancement.

There are certain position characteristics that facilitate individual objective success within an organization like the Air Force. Specifically, assignment progression and duty location can contribute significantly to an individual's chances of getting advanced. When it comes to the rank order of what items Air Force promotion boards consider to be the most important, one study by Wayland (2002) ranks assignment progression as the third most important item, behind two different performance-based reports; he ranks duty location as fifth most important. Assignment progression can be viewed as upward movement in responsibilities. Duty location refers to where the member was assigned. Assignments at less-than desirable locations can reflect positively on officers, while staying at one location too long, known as "homesteading," can reflect negatively on members (Wayland, 2002). It is clear that job position characteristics are key selection criteria for continuation. However, there are questions as to what types of position characteristics facilitate upward mobility.

While it is an individual responsibility to develop a career plan, there are particular duties that are more desirable for promotion. This thesis looked at the employment records of a sample of officers to assess what position characteristics led to more favorable promotion. The study examined what experiences and position characteristics faired well for one measure of employment progression that lends favorably to upward movement in the Air Force: Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) in-residence selection.

Investigative Questions

Do assignments within subsets of the Air Force's structure lead to better professional accomplishment than others? Do vocations that align with the Air Force's primary mission to "fly, fight, and win" lead to greater attainment? For instance, do promotion boards view assignments within Air Combat Command, the Air Force's command charged with the execution of combat operations, to be more salient than an assignment in Air Force Materiel Command, whose primary responsibility is acquisitions?

Similarly, do assignment locations that offer people more exposure to Air Force senior leadership, which can increase opportunities for sponsored mobility, lead to more professional advancement than others? Within the Air Force, installations are commanded by senior leaders: generals and colonels. However, while some bases have as few as six colonels and no generals, headquarters bases have multiple generals. So, do assignments at headquarters bases, which have numerous generals and allow for more contact with senior management, lead to further development? For instance, do boards view assignments at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, which is the headquarters base for Air Combat Command and boasts numerous general officer billets, more favorably than assignments at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, which is not a headquarters base and has no general officer billets?

Also, to what extents do those having interactions and developed relationships with senior Air Force leaders move ahead more regularly than officers with fewer? Again, using the headquarters example, do officers that served on a headquarters staff get advanced at a higher rate than officers that have not served on a headquarters staff?

Similarly, do assignments as executive officers tend to be more favorable for continuation? Finally, do assignment locations at overseas installations lead to more upward mobility than others? For instance, do boards view assignments at European and Pacific bases as more salient than assignments at United States bases?

II. Literature Review

Career Success

A career can be described as the unfolding order of a person's employment record over time (Arthur, et al., 2005). Ng, et al., (2005) define success in a vocation as the accrued positive labor and mental consequences resulting from individual work experiences. This definition is in concert with the Oxford English Dictionary's (1989) two definitions of success, specifically, "the attainment of an object according to one's desire," and "the prosperous achievement of something attempted" (Arthur, et al., 2005). There are two ways to characterize career success. The first way is to depict it by variables that measure subjective or intrinsic career success (Ng, et al., 2005). The second way is to account for variables that measure objective or extrinsic career success.

Subjective Career Success

Subjective career success measures focus on attitudes, emotions, and perceptions of how folks feel about their accomplishments (Feldman & Ng, 2007). These actions include among other things, trade satisfaction and institutional commitment. Subjective career success is harder to quantify because members value different things in different ways. People have varying employment goals, and put different values on factors such as income, work location, assignment progression, educational opportunities, and personal/family life (Arthur, et al., 2005). From time to time there is overlap in what people may consider as vital measures of subjective career success, however, it is not

suggested that all the personnel of a particular group have the same subjective work ambitions.

Objective Career Success

Objective measures of career success focus on external indicators such as hierarchal improvement or income increases rather than emotional observations (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Objective career success measures are typically characterized as "visible." Job improvement, education level, awards, and salary earned are a few measures of objective career success. Salary, salary growth, and advancement information are generally available and are representative measures of objective career success (Heslin, 2005). Because these measures are quantifiable, it is straightforward to use them to make distinctions between people. This is particularly valuable when deciding who to promote when a company picks candidates from an internal labor market.

Internal Labor Market

Many development systems choose from internal labor markets and a number of studies have highlighted these systems. Companies and employees can both gain from an internal labor market arrangement. Businesses gain because they get to pick workers for continuation using an eager and accessible labor supply, which reduces market uncertainties (O'Mahoney & Bechky, 2006). An internal labor market structure allows a corporation to obtain a return on their investment in developing their employees. Human resources benefit in an internal labor market by accruing safety from exterior dangers; internal labor market earnings are arbitrated and enhancement opportunities are typically

acknowledged. For example, businesses and individuals can increase common perceptions of upward movement using a schedule. These institutional observations positively influence motivation and satisfaction—they can boost one's perception of accomplishment (O'Mahoney & Bechky, 2006). This is particularly useful since internal labor markets structure careers around job ladders.

Job Ladders

With job ladders, people enter an association at the bottom rung of a ladder that can be characterized as a "port of entry" (Capelli & Cascio, 1991). This model is underpinned by the theory that each line of employment has, to some degree, a firm-specific production model. Workers that have learned these explicit labor practices are more valuable, and these employees are rewarded for their improved worth through customary advancement and/or regular earnings increases (Camuffo, 2002). Personnel continue up the ladder along a well-defined course, and generally, one rung at a time (Baker & Holmstrom, 1995). There is characteristically little space for lateral movement and effectively, no demotions. In businesses that employ job ladders, positions above entry level are normally filled from inside the firm (Capelli & Cascio, 1991). Career ladders are valuable to internal labor market societies because they give milestones for training skills specific to a location on the ladder. Employers repeatedly present large premiums for higher-level jobs on promotion ladders to encourage folks to stay with the company (on the ladder) and keep on working in the direction of the top positions (Capelli & Cascio, 1991). Some companies even offer "dual-career ladders," where scientists and engineers who wish to continue to use their technical capability, rather than

enter management, can accumulate the same compensation that advancing supervisors earn (Goldstein, 1988). Multiple career paths allow businesses to retain technical employees (Joinson, 1997). The various reward systems can be characterized as "career tournament" models which allow companies to assess employees and "rack and stack" them, ranking the workers using ordinal statistics (Capelli & Cascio, 1991).

Tournament Theory

Lazear and Rosen (1981) further define selection through what they call "tournament theory," indicating that progression occurs in a tournament arrangement. Often classified as an "up-or-out" continuation structure, these frameworks triumph in several professional service firms such as law, accounting, or consulting (Malos & Campion, 2000). O'Mahoney & Bechky (2006) point out that stretchwork is labor that fits with an individual's earlier work practice but adds a small element that extends his or her skills in a new direction. Stretchwork can put the individual in a position that may offer development. The key to tournament theory is that companies value certain positions for continuation and put their most gifted employees in positions where they can be further evaluated, racked, and stacked (Malos & Campion, 2000). Unfortunately, organizations that use this type of promotion scheme regularly let go of persons that are just as fruitful as those that progressed in the tournament. Fortunately though, there are many upsides to the tournament structure used in an internal labor market, which facilitates upward mobility, and more specifically, contest and sponsored mobility.

Contest Mobility

The contest mobility outlook proposes that work performance and adding worth to a firm is what makes the largest difference in getting in front or in getting advanced (Ng, et al., 2005). Personnel go forward based on their abilities and contributions. Individuals compete in an open and fair competition, and advancement goes to the folks with the greatest accomplishments. Cable and Murray (1999) deduce, based on studying doctoral students' track records, that graduate school publications are a more significant predictor of job offers received and salary than the educational institutions attended by the doctoral students. While there is a statistical significance between publication success and job offers ($p < .05$), there is no statistical significance between Ph.D. departments and job offers ($p > .10$). This demonstrates that a contest mobility system can be used to predict success. Contest mobility further advocates that senior supervision cannot always determine who will move on in the system. Using a race analogy, contest mobility suggests that individuals that start off slowly are still able to win the race by committing themselves to the tasks at hand (Ng, et al., 2005). As in a race, there is occasionally high regard for personnel that start off slow and finish strong (Cable & Murray, 1999). In a contest mobility atmosphere, usually, the race should not be confirmed over until all the runners have finished the course. Contest mobility norms are adverse to rulings made prior to the conclusion of the race; those ahead at any point in the race do not get a benefit (Cable & Murray, 1999).

Sponsored Mobility

A sponsored mobility perspective suggests that senior management pays special notice to personnel that are deemed to have elevated potential (Ng, et al., 2005). Executives then offer activities to help sponsored individuals proceed. Subsequently, sponsorship goes to those that attain success early on. Once recognized as potential elites, the chosen workers receive positive treatment to make them still better and differentiate them further from their non-elite peers. Again, using the race analogy, chosen runners get to start the race early and are more likely to end ahead of non-elite runners (Ng, et al., 2005). In contrast to a contest-mobility system, persons in a sponsored-mobility situation do not have as much individual alternative in attaining goals, especially if they are not picked as potential elites near the beginning of the process. Organizational sponsorship indicates that special assistance is provided to sponsored individuals to improve their chances for promotion. These predictors consist of sponsorship (the extent to which members receive sponsorship from senior-level administration), superior support, training, skill development opportunities, and resources (Ng, et al., 2005). Sponsored mobility encourages senior management to pick candidates to sponsor, relieving the contenders from some of the competitive challenges highlighted in contest mobility; the sponsors are then able to make the most of socialization and schooling (Cable & Murray, 1999). Higher-ranking managers can share private insights on what it takes to go forward in the structure, work with certain employees to sharpen their skills, and communicate information on how to use those abilities in real-world circumstances (Messmer, 2006).

Proximity to the Mission and Career Success

In efforts to advance industry processes, companies continue to stop performing non-strategic labors, and as an alternative, opt to outsource these efforts (Moore, 2005). If there is a task that does not further the mission, institutions commonly outsource to a third-party supplier (Bowen, 2006). The Federal Government adheres to this methodology and further codified outsourcing with Public Law 105 (1998), which includes the Federal Activities Inventory Reform (FAIR) Act. The FAIR Act provides a process for identifying functions within the government that are not inherently governmental functions. Each year, the head of each executive agency submits, to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, a list of activities performed by Federal Government sources for the executive agency that, in the judgment of the head of the executive agency, are not inherently governmental functions. The Air Force Strategic Planning Directive for Fiscal Years 2006-2023 (2004) requires the Air Force to determine the fundamental manpower and organizational tenets that will shape the demographics of the Air Force. This includes specifying core and non-core competencies. Non-core competencies are candidates for potential divestiture, and ultimately, outsourcing. Thus, those who pursue positions consistent with Air Force's strategic objectives, or "core competencies," should be rewarded over members that do not. Arguably, persons in roles directly related to the core competencies should be considered first for promotion. In addition, the closer personnel are to the mission of the Air Force, the better their chances for sponsorship, and ultimately, career success. To gain this sponsorship in an organization, individuals typically need exposure to senior management.

Exposure to Senior Management and Career Success

Experts indicate that backing and mentoring relationships can lead to improved exposure and visibility to higher management, and this in turn, can optimistically influence goal attainment (Dreher & Bretz, 1990). In the modern workplace, mentoring occurs between one with pre-eminence who is willing to share with a younger, inexperienced person (Nelson, 2001). Kram notes (1983) that the mentor relationship increasingly enhances development early in a career and also at the midcareer stage. If early career success increases the likelihood of receiving notice from a mentor or sponsor, the probability of promotion later in the process increases (Dreher & Bretz, 1990). Numerous studies support the notion that individual advancement within an organization can be facilitated by these work-related relationships.

Service Overseas and Career Success

Service in other countries contributes to career success. Taking assignments overseas broadens individual experiences and opens opportunities for workers when they return (Rosato, 2005). One survey of human relations practitioners showed that a number of workers believe that experience and performance, particularly if this is achieved in various countries, different trades, and at different firms, is more significant than qualifications over time (Anonymous, 2003). It is suggested that individuals need to move between organizations, responsibilities, and localities to fast-track their career. The study affirmed that the majority of human relations respondents agreed that "employees will have to change organizations to move up the career ladder" and that moving to work in a different country or business unit "will become a key way to progress your career."

Companies indicated that employers increasingly value experience and performance over qualifications for professional continuation within the business. The majority of institutions studied recommended that getting employed in a different nation or business unit was a key way to advance your career (Anonymous, 2003).

Statement of Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent at major commands aligned with combat operations than personnel not selected.

Air Combat Command is the lead major command for the service's Combat Air Forces and is closest aligned with the Air Force's primary mission to "fly, fight, and win." Consistent with literature, personnel chosen for IDE in-residence will have more time spent at commands, like Air Combat Command, that directly support the mission than personnel not chosen for IDE in-residence.

Hypothesis 2: Officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent at bases aligned with combat operations than personnel not selected.

Langley Air Force Base, a fighter aircraft base, is closest aligned with the Air Force's primary mission to "fly, fight, and win." Consistent with literature, officers picked for IDE in-residence will have more time spent at bases, like Langley Air Force Base, that directly support the mission than officers not picked for IDE in-residence.

Hypothesis 3: Officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent on staffs than personnel not selected.

Staff officer duties offer workers more exposure to Air Force senior leadership and subsequently, more opportunities for sponsorship. Consistent with literature, workers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent on headquarter staffs than workers not selected for IDE in-residence.

Hypothesis 4: Officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent as executive officers than personnel not selected.

Executive officer duties offer employees more exposure to Air Force senior leadership, since executive officers typically work for the ranks of colonels and above. Consistent with literature, officers chosen for IDE in-residence will have more time spent as executive officers than officers not chosen for IDE in-residence.

Hypothesis 5: Officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent overseas than personnel not selected.

Since the Korean War, Osan Air Base, South Korea has served as one of two United States Air Force main operating bases in Korea; Osan provides individuals opportunities

to expand their experience base overseas, as do assignments in the rest of the Far East, the Middle East, and Europe. Consistent with literature, individuals picked for IDE in-residence will have more time spent abroad than individuals not picked for IDE in-residence.

III. Methodology

Organizational Context

The Air Force is an appropriate organization to study with respect to career success in an internal labor market because the Air Force relies almost exclusively on an internal market. Air Force Instruction 36-2501 (2004), Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation, indicates a promotion is not a reward for past service, rather, it is a recommendation for a higher grade based on past performance and future potential. The instruction further indicates that the Secretary of the Air Force issues written instructions to selection boards that include eligibility and selection criteria for promotion of active duty list officers to colonel and below. Air Force Pamphlet 36-2506, You and Your Promotions—The Air Force Officer Promotion Program (1997) lists several factors that the Secretary of the Air Force approves to help guide the selection board, to include job performance, leadership, professional qualities, breadth and depth of experience, job responsibility, academic and professional education, and specific achievements. Breadth and depth of experience include among other things where the officer is assigned, at what level, when, and the variety of jobs and tasks.

While some officers might dispute that there is a known expectation of progress needed for advancement, most officers know what they need to do to remain competitive (Wayland, 2002). Individuals that attend in-residence Professional Military Education programs tend to be more successful in their career progression and are more likely to be chosen for subsequent promotions than officers not attending (DeGraff, et al, 1996). One

opportunity to attend school in-residence is called Intermediate Development Education (IDE) and typically occurs at the major rank (11-13 years in service). Air Force Instruction 36-2301 (2002) indicates that to be picked for Intermediate Service School (ISS) (which is now IDE) in-residence, majors and major-selects must be chosen as an IDE candidate or be nominated by their management level as a non-candidate to compete at the annual Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) IDE Central Board. The major promotion board picks the best-qualified officers for in-residence IDE; promotees with the highest scores in the top 20 percent from the promotion order of merit list become selects for school in-residence attendance (AFPC, 2006).

Numerous career fields have career field education and training plans in order to, among other things, keep officers competitive for greater responsibilities that come with progression. Such is the case with civil engineer officers. The civil engineer career field published the Career Field Education and Training Plan (CFETP) (2002). The CFETP provides information for the civil engineer occupational series, 32EX and outlines recommended training, education, and experience to chart and execute a civil engineer career ranging from entry-level to squadron commander. It recommends the appropriate points and positions in an individual's career to gain particular knowledge, skills, and abilities. For job experience, a civil engineer is asked to build depth through technical expertise early in a career, and then progress to duties that provide more breadth, such as flight chief or command (CFETP, 2002).

It is recommended civil engineers show a balance of base level and staff duties, coupled with broadening opportunities (CFETP, 2002). It suggests that officers build a

strong foundation during the initial part of a career, and for sufficient breadth and depth, a minimum of two to three permanent changes of station are recommended. The CFETP suggests a balanced approach to job experience, an overseas tour, and experience in several different major commands. Major General Clifton Wright, former Director of Engineering and Services, Headquarters Air Force, noted:

> "It is essential that you develop your career game plan and realize that it's yours and your responsibility to keep current. Ask advice from others as you develop it and then let your bosses know what your aspirations are so that they can help you attain your career objectives" (CFETP, 2002).

While there are many ways to reach career objectives, there are certain Air Force duty assignments that compete more favorably for promotion.

As discussed previously, Wayland's (2002) study ranks assignment progression as the third most important item for promotion; he ranks duty location as fifth (Table 1):

Table 1. Items Boards Consider for Promotion

Item	Rank
Promotion Recommendation Form	1
Officer Performance Reports	2
Assignment Progression	3
Awards/Decorations	4
Duty Location	5

Assignment progression can be viewed as increasing progress in responsibilities. Duty location refers to assignments at less-than sought-after settings or homesteading (Wayland, 2002). It is clear that job position characteristics are key selection criteria for promotions.

Participants

Archival duty histories of a stratified-random sample of 600 Air Force officers that entered the Air Force in the years 1991 through 1993 were used in this analysis. The duty histories were chosen to ensure that the sample included a representative number of officers that were picked for IDE in-residence and officers that were not picked for IDE in-residence. Thus, the duty histories analyzed as part of this study included 300 members that were selected by the majors' promotion board for IDE in-residence and 300 members that were not selected for IDE through an in-residence program (Table 2):

Table 2. Duty Histories Selected

Year Groups	**No. of IDE-select Duty Histories**	**No. of IDE Non-select Duty Histories**
1991	100	100
1992	100	100
1993	100	100

From the duty histories, it seemed that a wide array of occupations were represented that reflected officers that would be expected in the Air Force. Pilots, aircraft

maintenance officers, mission support personnel, managers (at several levels), and executive officers were represented in the sample.

Measures

The major promotion board picks the best-qualified officers for in-residence IDE; promotees with the highest scores in the top 20 percent from the promotion order of merit list become selects for school attendance. Thus, the 1991 year groups met the selection board in 2001. Duty title days after December 31st, 2001 were not used to assess the 1991 year group. Similarly, the 1992 and 1993 year groups met their respective selection boards and were stratified in 2002. Duty title days after December 31st, 2002 were not used in assessing the 1992 and 1993 year groups.

The number of days each member spent under each duty title was computed using the Effective Duty Date (EDD) that is associated with that duty title. The following table (Table 3) shows an example of the calculated days for one member:

Table 3. Example Duty History

AFSC		DUTY TITLE	ORGANIZATION	TYPE	CMD	LOCATION	STATE	EDD	Days in Job	In ACC	At Langley	Abroad	Field Job	Staff Job	Exec
33S	4	CHIEF, ISR SUPPORT BRANCH	AIR COMBAT	COMMAND	ACC	LANGLEY	VA	19 Jun 2002	195	195	195	0	0	195	0
33S	3	LOGISTICS FLIGHT COMMANDER	INTELLIGENCE	SQUADRON	AIA	KADENA	JAPAN	01 Jan 2000	900	0	0	900	900	0	0
33S	3	CHIEF OF LOGISTICS	INTELLIGENCE	SQUADRON	AIA	KADENA	JAPAN	21 Aug 1999	133	0	0	133	133	0	0
33S	3	CHIEF, DESKTOP SERVICES BR	AF PENTAGON	FOA	PCA	PENTAGON	VA	11 Nov 1996	1013	0	0	0	1013	0	0
33S	3	CHIEF, BASE NETWORK CONTROL	MISSION SPT	SQUADRON	MTC	KIRTLAND	NM	01 Aug 1995	468	0	0	0	468	0	0
37A	3	ADMN OFFICER WING READINESS	AIR BASE	WING	MTC	KIRTLAND	NM	01 Oct 1993	669	0	0	0	669	0	0

Note the top two lines in Table 3. For “AFSC” (Air Force Specialty Code), the officer was a “33S4.” A “4” suffix indicates a staff level job, a “3” suffix indicates a field level job. For “DUTY TITLE,” the officer was “CHIEF, ISR SUPPORT BRANCH” at

"ORGANIZATION" and "TYPE" "AIR COMBAT" "COMMAND." The officer had this job at "LOCATION" "LANGLEY" in the "STATE" of "VA" starting with the EDD (Effective Duty Date) 19 June 2002. Since this officer's promotion board met in 2002, the "Days in Job" at the end of 2002 totaled "195." This member spent "195" days in this duty title "In ACC" in 2002. Coincidentally, this member spent 195 days "At Langley," and "195" days in a "Staff Job" in 2002. This process was replicated for all 600 test members and all their duty titles and the number of days were added to sum how many days each officer spent at each major command, at each Air Force base, on a staff, as an executive officer, and at overseas locations.

After the number of days was computed for each category, the total days each individual spent in each of eight Air Force major commands were input into SPSS and logistic regressions were run on the numbers. IDE in-residence selects were coded as a "1," IDE non-selects were coded as a "0." Logistic regressions were used because they allow the user to predict the probability of a dependent variable occurring given known values of independent variables (Fields, 2005). Similar to linear regressions, logistic regressions tell not only how well the model fits the data, but also the individual contributions of predictors. Logistic regressions use an estimated regression coefficient (b) and standard error (SE) to compute a Wald statistic for each independent variable, such that:

$$\text{Wald} = b/SE_b$$

The Wald statistic uses the chi-square distribution (Fields, 2005). If the Wald coefficient is significantly different from zero, than it can be assumed that the predictor is making a significant contribution to the prediction of the outcome. Logistic regressions were also used to assess the school selection probabilities for individual installations. Further analysis was done using t-tests. Means and variances were computed and t-tests were used to test the null hypothesis regarding the observed differences between two means. T-tests were used to assess data corresponding to mean days spent on staffs, as executive officers, and in service overseas.

IV. Analysis and Results

Hypothesis 1 suggested that officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent at major commands aligned with combat operations than personnel not selected. Commands like Air Combat Command (ACC); Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC); Air Force Space Command (AFSPC); Air Mobility Command (AMC); Pacific Air Forces (PACAF); and United States Air Forces, Europe (USAFE) were expected to have better IDE in-residence selection rates when compared to Air Education and Training Command (AETC) and Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC). The former commands directly support the military's warfighting Combatant Commands, while the latter do not. Using SPSS's logistic regression capability and comparing the major commands relative to one-another produced mixed results. Across all the major commands tested ($n = 8$), only 2 were significant ($p < .10$), as shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Major Command and Selection Significance

Major Command	IDE-select Days/Person	IDE Non-select Days/Person	Significance (p value)
ACC	741	732	.56
AETC	671	812	.03[b]
AFMC	403	368	.88
AFSOC	131	49	.03[a]
AFSPC	420	389	.83
AMC	423	539	.22
PACAF	217	234	.70
USAFE	212	169	.38

[a] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: IDE-selects spent more days

[b] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: Non-selects spent more days

IDE in-residence selects on average spent 131 days in Air Force Special Operations Command, which is a major command closely aligned with combat operations. Non-selects averaged 49 days in Air Force Special Operations Command. Conversely, IDE in-residence selects on average had 671 days in Air Education and Training Command, which as the name suggests, is the service's training command. Non-selects averaged 812 days in Air Education and Training Command. In these two cases, the results worked as intended where the in-residence selects tended to have more time in a warfighting command in the case of Air Force Special Operations Command and the non-selects had more time in the training command in the case of Air Education and

Training Command. The rest of the commands did not show a statistically significant difference between in-residence selects and non-selects.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent at bases aligned with combat operations than personnel not selected. Like the previous example, bases like Langley Air Force Base, Virginia; Hurlburt Field, Florida; and Aviano Air Base, Italy were expected to have higher IDE in-residence selection rates when compared to Randolph Air Force Base, Texas and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. The former bases have combat aircraft assigned, while the latter do not. Using SPSS's logistic regression capability and comparing the bases relative to one-another produced mixed results. Across all the bases tested ($n = 74$), only ten were significant ($p < .10$), as shown in Table 5 (Appendix shows the results for all the bases):

Table 5. Installation and Selection Significance, $p < .10$

Base	IDE-select Days/Person	IDE Non-select Days/Person	Significance (p value)
Aviano	35	10	.10[a]
Columbus	36	66	.04[b]
Davis-Monthan	29	64	.02[b]
Grand Forks	41	97	.06[b]
Holloman	37	13	.08[a]
Hurlburt	84	31	.02[a]
Laughlin	45	78	.07[b]
Mildenhall	31	9	.04[a]
Nellis	58	32	.02[a]
Pentagon	102	48	.04[a]

[a] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: IDE-selects spent more days

[b] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: Non-selects spent more days

IDE in-residence selects on average spent 35 days at Aviano Air Base, which is a fighter aircraft base closely aligned with combat operations. Non-selects averaged 10 days at Aviano. Conversely, IDE in-residence selects on average had 36 days at Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi, which is a training base. Non-selects averaged 66 days at Columbus. A statistical significance existed between days spent at Aviano Air Base, Italy; Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico; Hurlburt Field, Florida; Royal Air Force Base Mildenhall, United Kingdom; Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada; and the Pentagon,

Washington DC, and selection for IDE in-residence. IDE in-residence selects spent more days at these locations than non-selects. Similarly, a statistical significance existed between days spent at Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi; Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona; Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota; and Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, and selection for IDE in-residence. IDE in-residence selects spent fewer days at these bases than non-selects. While these results did lend some support for the hypothesis, the pattern was hardly convincing. Several bases that were considered to be very closely aligned to combat operations, like Langley Air Force Base, home of Air Combat Command's headquarters, were not significant (selects spent 62 days; non-selects spent 70 days, $p > .10$). In the same vein, Randolph Air Force Base, home of Air Education and Training Command's headquarters, was not significant. In all, two Air Combat Command bases, Holloman and Nellis, showed a statistical significance between days and selection, where IDE in-residence selects spent more days. One Air Combat Command base, Davis-Monthan, showed a statistical significance between days and selection, where IDE in-residence selects spent fewer days. The remaining 11 Air Combat Command bases that were studied showed no significance either way.

Hypothesis 3 suggested officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent on staffs than personnel not selected. Using a t-test, results did not support this hypothesis. There was no statistical significance ($p >.10$), as shown in Table 6:

Table 6. Select Duties and Selection Significance

Category	IDE-select Days/Person	IDE Non-select Days/Person	Significance (p value)
Staff	303	261	.297
Executive officer	155	96	.003[a]
Overseas	467	389	.096[a]

[a] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: IDE-selects spent more days

IDE in-residence selects on average spent 303 days on staffs, while non-selects averaged 261 days.

Hypothesis 4 suggested officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent as executive officers than personnel not selected. Using a t-test, results supported this hypothesis. There was a statistical significance ($p < .10$), as shown in Table 6. IDE in-residence selects on average spent 155 days as executive officers, while non-selects averaged 96 days.

Hypothesis 5 suggested officers selected for IDE in-residence will have more time spent overseas than personnel not selected. Using a t-test, results supported this hypothesis. There was a statistical significance ($p < .10$), as shown in Table 6. IDE in-residence selects on average spent 467 days overseas, while non-selects averaged 389 days.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to extend research on internal labor markets by examining position characteristics and their relationship to selection for advancement in the market. This study showed some support, but was not completely convincing, that proximity to mission enhanced upward mobility in an internal labor market. The research better supported the theories that exposure to senior leadership and services overseas increased mobility. This thesis also supported the premise that the Air Force promotion system is consistent with commercial sector career mobility literature.

There was some evidence that personnel chosen for IDE in-residence spent more time at major commands and bases aligned with the primary mission of the Air Force—combat operations, then their counterparts that were not picked for IDE in-residence. As expected and consistent with the private sector, some officers that were in closer proximity to core Air Force missions did better with regards to the school in-residence selection metric of objective career success. Personnel that spent more time in Air Force Special Operations Command and at bases such as Aviano, Holloman, Nellis (all fighter aircraft bases), Hurlburt (special operations base), Mildenhall (mobility aircraft base), and the Pentagon (Headquarters Air Force) faired better statistically when it came down to selection for IDE in-residence. Note particularly that officers with more time aligned with special operations in general faired better for in-residence school selection. In 2002, the promotion boards and by default, the in-residence school boards, met for the 1992 and 1993 year groups. Also in 2002, the Department of Defense was involved heavily with

the fighting associated with Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, and special operations were at the forefront of these combat operations in Afghanistan. This may have influenced members of the promotion boards to favor officers with ties to special operations, thereby increasing their chances of getting in-residence school assignments. Also note there was no statistical difference between the average days in-residence selects and non-selects spent in Air Combat Command or at Langley Air Force Base. This meant that statistically, there was no advantage to having more or less days in the lead command for the Combat Air Forces, or in one of the Air Force's premier fighter wings, which seemed counterintuitive. Members chosen for IDE in-residence spent less time at major commands and bases that were less aligned with combat operations. As could be expected, officers that spent less time in Air Education and Training Command and at bases such as Columbus and Laughlin (both training bases) faired better statistically when it came down to selection for IDE in-residence.

Results showed that individuals who spent more time on staffs, duties that exposed them to senior leaders on a regular basis, did not have a significant statistical advantage for school selection. Conversely, results showed very clearly that personnel who spent more time as executive officers, duties that exposed them to Air Force senior officers, did better in terms of school in-residence selection. This made sense; in line with the commercial sector, the closer personnel were to senior leadership, the better the chances an officer had of being sponsored, which enhanced upward mobility. Executive officers were typically hand-picked for the executive responsibilities and many times, had already been stratified very favorably in comparison to their peers. Additionally, officers

that spent more time overseas competed well for school in-residence selection. This was logical, as supported by private sector literature, that personnel that served overseas increased their experience base, and ultimately, their opportunities for continuation.

Implications

These findings provide mentors and officers looking to ascend the ladder with several pieces of information. First, to maximize opportunities for progression, it would benefit officers to seek jobs that are closer to the Air Force's core missions. While folks may prefer assignments based on duty titles or in certain geographical locations, it would further benefit officers to take assignments that are closely aligned with combat operations. Second, to improve the likelihood of promotion, it would benefit personnel to seek executive duties. Proximity to senior Air Force leadership via executive responsibilities provides great opportunities for young officers to pick up sponsors, which can help with career mobility and ultimately, objective career success. Finally, to enhance promotion opportunities, officers are encouraged to work overseas. Overseas experience builds depth and makes those officers that know and understand different theaters of operation more valuable, which increases their stock and concurrently, can make them more favorable for promotion.

Limitations

This study assessed a relatively small sample of 600 officers over three year groups. Assessing a bigger officer pool over the course of many years would provide more fidelity to the current study as well as additional statistics for comparison. Looking

again at the success of the people in the 1991-1993 year groups with duty titles in special operations, how would they have fared if Operation ENDURING FREEDOM had not occurred? In other words, have officers with duties aligned with special operations competed for school in-residence just as well in the 1990s, when wars in the Middle East, Bosnia, and Serbia were less special operations oriented?

Additionally, 1993 year group personnel met their major's promotion board in October of 2002 and promotion and in-residence school selections were based on what the officers accomplished to that point in time. However, this study captured duty titles and time elapsed during the entire 365 days of each year group's promotion year. For the 1993 year group, for example, this study included duty data from October 2002 until December of 2002. So in theory, days are included in the final numbers of this report that were not part of the school in-residence selection packages that met the boards.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study laid the groundwork for future research. This report looked at aspects of proximity to the mission, exposure to senior leadership, and service overseas, and how much the Air Force promotion system coincides with career mobility literature. Future studies can test different facets of career success literature. Literature highlights "recency" and specifically, how a person's current duty title that meets a selection board can impact their chances for promotion. In other words, further research may help unlock whether it is better to meet the board from a field position or a staff position, or from a flight commander billet or an executive officer billet.

Another feasible topic to look at is duty characteristic combinations. There are likely particular combinations that tend to be more favorable for school in-residence selection. The probability for selection may go up, for example, for officers that served in Air Combat Command and were executive officers. Similarly, promotion opportunities may increase for officers that served overseas and have a lot of staff time. One final topic is to look at whether certain career fields compete better than others. Pilots, who are closer to the mission, may compete more favorably for promotion than mission support personnel. Career fields that deploy frequently may compete more favorably for promotion than career fields that do not deploy frequently.

Appendix. Installation and Selection Significance, All Installations

Page 1/4	IDE-select	IDE Non-select	Significance
Base	**Days/Person**	**Days/Person**	**(p value)**
Altus	24	36	.95
Andrews	13	35	.12
Aviano	35	10	.10[a]
Barksdale	27	29	.58
Beale	6	11	.50
Bolling	14	5	.42
Brooks	18	6	.16
Cannon	26	12	.37
Charleston	47	22	.30
Columbus	36	66	.04[b]
Davis-Monthan	29	64	.02[b]
Dover	16	47	.11
Dyess	48	33	.32
Edwards	48	26	.30
Eglin	47	77	.37
Eielson	13	9	.60
Ellsworth	14	29	.27
Elmendorf	36	59	.17
Fairchild	21	41	.52
FE Warren	93	55	.23
Goodfellow	20	22	.35
Grand Forks	41	97	.06[b]

[a] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: IDE-selects spent more days

[b] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: Non-selects spent more days

Page 2/4 Base	IDE-select Days/Person	IDE Non-select Days/Person	Significance (p value)
Gunter	5	9	.68
Hanscom	26	22	.99
Hickam	32	21	.39
Hill	27	30	.49
Holloman	37	13	.08[a]
Hurlburt	84	31	.02[a]
Incirlik	13	16	.83
Kadena	41	54	.59
Keesler	22	25	.56
Kelly	30	11	.17
Kirtland	57	51	.90
Kunsan	13	14	.79
Lackland	25	64	.12
Lajes	5	0	.42
Lakenheath	46	45	.76
Langley	62	70	.59
Laughlin	45	78	.07[b]
Little Rock	56	38	.30
Los Angeles	74	40	.26
Luke	45	34	.51
MacDill	18	33	.58
Malmstrom	72	95	.78
Maxwell	29	56	.12

[a] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: IDE-selects spent more days

[b] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: Non-selects spent more days

Page 3/4	IDE-select	IDE Non-select	Significance
Base	**Days/Person**	**Days/Person**	**(p value)**
McChord	22	17	.58
McConnell	12	39	.26
McGuire	42	24	.33
Mildenhall	31	9	.04[a]
Minot	66	49	.29
Misawa	23	19	.77
Moody	40	44	.55
Mountain Home	12	25	.28
Nellis	58	32	.02[a]
Osan	42	27	.63
Patrick	22	28	.47
Pentagon	102	48	.04[a]
Pope	47	49	.72
Ramstein	58	51	.48
Randolph	68	91	.62
Robins	0	0	.68
Scott	62	54	.33
Seymour-Johnson	44	52	.46
Shaw	31	38	.20
Sheppard	41	23	.52
Spangdahlem	24	16	.77
Tinker	85	84	.80
Travis	41	62	.93

[a] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: IDE-selects spent more days

[b] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: Non-selects spent more days

Page 4/4	IDE-select	IDE Non-select	Significance
Base	**Days/Person**	**Days/Person**	**(p value)**
Tyndall	38	48	.27
Vance	43	66	.61
Vandenberg	66	66	.70
Whiteman	13	12	.66
Wright-Patterson	144	135	.64
Yokota	35	33	.89

[a] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: IDE-selects spent more days

[b] Statistical significance existed between days and selection: Non-selects spent more days

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14. ABSTRACT

It is clear that job characteristics are key selection criteria for upward mobility. However, there are questions as to what types of position details facilitate individual objective success within an organization like the United States Air Force that relies solely on an internal labor market. While it is an individual responsibility to develop an employment plan, there are particular duties that are more desirable for continuation. This thesis looked at the professional records of a sample of officers to assess what position characteristics led to more advancement opportunities. It examined what duty experiences fared well for one measure of career progression that lends favorably to promotion in the Air Force: school in-residence selection. This study found that there was some support for the notion that proximity to mission enhanced opportunities for individual achievement in an internal labor market. The research better supported the theories that exposure to senior leadership and service overseas improved the likelihood of upward mobility.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

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